

“Whose life is it anyway?”

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price; therefore honor God with your body. " 1 Corinthians 6:19,20

"The moral question for us is not whether the suffering and dying are persons but whether we are the kind of persons who will care for them without doubting their worth." C. Everett Koop

Source : <http://www.jeremiahproject.com/culture/life3.html>



Karen Quinlan (1954-1985) lived for more than a decade in a vegetative state — brought on by alcohol and drugs in 1975 when she was 21; New Jersey courts let her parents take her off a respirator a year after her injury.

Nancy Cruzan, who was 25 when a 1983 car crash placed her in a vegetative state, lived nearly eight years before the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that her parents could withdraw her feeding tube.



In 1984, a near-fatal automobile accident left Nancy Cruzan in a 'persistent vegetative state.' To permit the removal of Nancy's life support, the Cruzan family waged a three-and-a-half year legal battle which became the first right-to-die case heard by the US Supreme Court.

(Source : PBS Frontline)

Nancy Cruzan died of dehydration by court order on December 26, 1990, following 12 days without food or water. She was 33 years old. Nancy was severely disabled as a result of a car injury in 1983. She was not dying. Following her accident she ate mashed potatoes, bananas, eggs and link sausage.

A gastrostomy tube was implanted, even though Nancy could chew and swallow, in order to make her long term care easier. When the decision was made to remove the tube, no one attempted to assess her ability to swallow. Spoon feeding in her case was judged to be "morally repugnant" and "totally inconsistent" with what was wanted, according to a doctor who evaluated her. Nancy could hear and see; smiled at amusing stories; cried at times when visitors left; sometimes tried to form words; experienced pain. She required no care except food and fluids, personal hygiene and repositioning to prevent bedsores. She could have been cared for at home.*

Source : The description of Nancy Cruzan is taken from transcripts of the court records, 3/9/88 - 3/11/88 and 11/1/90.

Christine Busalacchi was severely brain-injured in a car accident in 1987 and currently resides in the Missouri Rehabilitation Center, the same center that cared for Nancy Cruzan. Her condition is described as "persistent vegetative state." Christine can speak simple words, move her hands and legs on request, form emotional attachments, smile, and interact with people in her room. She is not dying. She is not on life-support machines. She is not receiving any extraordinary care. Her father is seeking her transfer to Minnesota for the purpose of removing her feeding tube.*

Source: *Description of Christine Busalacchi is from Pro-Life Action Ministries, Minneapolis, MN.*

On February 4, 1991 the state supplied videotape to St. Louis television stations which it said showed that Christine Busalacchi, severely brain-damaged almost four years ago, is no longer in a persistent vegetative state. Missouri is trying to keep the 20-year-old woman's father, Pete Busalacchi, from moving his daughter to another state.



The battle over Christine Busalacchi's right to life ended Sunday, March 7. The 22-year-old comatose Missouri woman died of starvation.

Miss Busalacchi's feeding tube was disconnected not long after a team of neurologists determined that she was in a "persistent vegetative state." In view of this determination, the Missouri State Supreme Court blocked efforts that would have prevented her father, Peter Busalacchi, from moving Christine to a private hospital where her feeding tube could be removed.

The Court denied attempts by pro-lifers to gain guardianship of Christine, and also ignored evidence that Christine may not actually have been in a "vegetative" state. While unable to speak, Miss Busalacchi was reported to have been "alert and responsive." She could laugh and smile, and had learned to take three meals a day by mouth. Christine was also able to breathe on her own. **Source:** American Life League.



Sun Hudson (September 25, 2004 – March 15, 2005) was an infant male allowed to die contrary to the wishes of his mother and legal guardian **Wanda Hudson**, via removal of his breathing tube.

Sun was born to Wanda Hudson and an unknown father on September 25, 2004 at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital in Houston, Texas, with thanatophoric dysplasia, a typically fatal form of congenital dwarfism.

His mother Wanda was informed that Sun was most likely unable to survive, and should be removed from his breathing tube pursuant to Chapter 166 of the Texas Health & Safety Code, the Advance Directives Act. Under this act, a doctor's recommendations to withdraw support must be cleared by a hospital's ethics committee. Wanda Hudson was given 10 days from written notice to find a new facility to accommodate Sun, but was unable to do so. Texas Children's Hospital states that it attempted to contact 40 facilities but was also unable to find one willing to accommodate Sun.

Legal delays prevented the removal of the breathing tube, which would have occurred on November 28, 2004. However, a judge ruled that the removal of the tube contrary to the wishes of Wanda Hudson was legal. On March 15, 2005, Texas Children's Hospital personnel removed Sun's breathing tube. Official reports state that he was sedated for the process and that he asphyxiated in under a minute.

Wanda Hudson disputes this, telling reporters "I wanted y'all to see my son for yourself, so you could see he was actually moving around. He was conscious." The media was previously blocked by the hospital from seeing Sun despite Wanda's invitation to do so, with privacy concerns cited as the official reason.

Bioethics implications : Bioethicists note that Sun's case is the first time a U.S. hospital has been allowed to remove life sustaining support contrary to the wishes of the legal guardian and lacking advance directives from the patient themselves. This, they claim, makes the issue precedent-setting in further cases where it may be applied.



Spiro Nikolouzos was born c. 1936, and incapacitated since 2001 from bleeding related to a brain shunt. He was hospitalized on February 10, 2005 at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital, Houston, Texas, and is in a persistent vegetative state. He is currently fed through a gastric feeding tube and is respiration by a breathing tube. The hospital wished to discontinue life support, allowing Nikolouzos to die.

His family was opposed to this and claimed that medical staff acknowledged he is not brain dead, and that the hospital's decision is related to the fact that Nikolouzos' Medicare funding is running out.

Under the Advance Directives Act, the hospital may override the family's wishes in such a matter should an ethics committee clear such an action.

However, his family won an emergency injunction preventing the removal of the life support apparatus, and on March 21, 2005 Spiro Nikolouzos was removed to Avalon Place nursing home in San Antonio, Texas. Avalon Place had rejected his application nine days earlier. The precedent set by the case of Sun Hudson may have helped to expedite the removal of Mr. Nikolouzos from artificial respiration prior to the move.

Theresa Marie Schindler Schiavo (December 3, 1963–March 31, 2005), commonly known as **Terri Schiavo**, was an American woman from St. Petersburg, Florida. On February 25, 1990, she suffered severe brain damage caused by a cardiac arrest, believed to have been brought on by chemical imbalances in the blood due to bulimia.



A bone scan (<http://www.hospicepatients.org/dr-walker-t-schiavo-bone-scan-deposition.txt>) performed one year after her 1990 injury showed, according to the radiologist who evaluated it, that Mrs. Schiavo had suffered prior traumatic injuries to multiple ribs (on both sides), to both sacroiliac joints, both knees, both ankles, several thoracic vertebrae, and to her right thigh, in addition to a minor compression fracture of the L1 vertebra. Mrs. Schiavo's family did not know of the existence of this scan until November 2002, 12 years after her brain damage and entry into an incapacitated state.

Forensic pathologist Dr. Michael Baden, provided with the scan but not with her history, suggested that physical trauma, specifically a head injury, probably caused Mrs. Schiavo's collapse, (<http://www.cnsnews.com/ViewCulture.asp?Page=Culture\archive\200310\CUL20031028a.html>), though in a later interview (<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,148756,00.html>), after learning her history, he agreed that the bulimia/hypokalemia explanation was also possible. The trauma is consistent with her cardiac arrest, fall, CPR attempts and eventual resuscitation.

Her husband has said she suffered from bulimia, an eating disorder, that resulted in a potassium deficiency that triggered the heart failure.

Upon becoming aware of the bone scan report possibly suggesting previous abuse, the Schindlers petitioned the Pinellas-Pasco Circuit Court for a full evidentiary hearing to evaluate the new evidence. On November 22, 2002, probate judge George Greer denied the motion, stating that the issue of trauma 12 years earlier was irrelevant to the current case.

In a court case in 2003, the Schindlers submitted two affidavits filed by nurses who cared for Schiavo between 1995 and 1997.

<http://www.terrisfight.org/documents/CIyerAffidavit090203.htm>

(<http://www.terrisfight.org/documents/hlawaffidavit.htm>) The nurses claim that Schiavo was responsive, that Michael Schiavo did not allow any therapy for her and was eager to see her die; one affidavit even claims that he attempted to kill her with insulin injections. Judge Greer ruled that these statements were "incredible to say the least," as they were contradicted by medical records and other testimony.

Dr. Ronald Cranford, lead doctor for Michael Schiavo, is an advocate for the "right to die ". Critics claim that he lets his support for euthanasia interfere with his diagnoses; in particular they state that Cranford diagnosed Robert Wendland as PVS when he was able to move using a motorized wheelchair and was capable of distinguishing and picking up colored blocks on request.

Carla Iyer, a nurse at the Palm Garden of Largo Convalescent Center in Largo, Fla. who cared for Terri Schiavo, claims that Michael Schiavo has developed a hatred of Terri Schiavo and her life.

She testified: "Throughout my time at Palm Gardens, Michael Schiavo was focused on Terri's death. Michael would say 'When is she going to die?' 'Has she died yet?'... Other statements which I recall him making include 'Can't anything be done to accelerate her death - won't she ever die?' When she wouldn't die, Michael would be furious." (<http://www.freerepublic.com/f-news/1006944/posts/bitch>) This account has been disputed by some who consider the quotes fabricated or taken out of context, while others insist they are true. Judge Greer ruled that these statements were "incredible to say the least," as they were contradicted by medical records and other testimony. [32] (<http://mediamatters.org/items/200503230001>)

Schiavo and attorney Felos decided that greater controls were needed. In April 2000, they moved Terri surreptitiously from the nursing home that had been her home for six years to the Hospice of the Florida Sun Coast, a place intended for people in the last stages of an illness.

Regulations generally prohibit a hospice from taking a patient who is not terminally ill and expected to live longer than six months to a year. But Felos was chairman of the board of directors of the hospice and was able to arrange for her admission. He resigned his position shortly thereafter. **Source:** © 2003 WorldNetDaily.com

Attorney **George J. Felos** is a nationally recognized expert in right-to-die cases and guest minister to various churches in his spare time. **Source:**
<http://www.bluedolphinpublishing.com/Felos.htm>

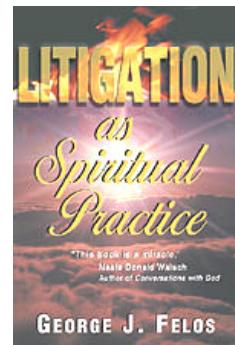
In his book Litigation as Spiritual Practice, Felos wrote that his work is part of a spiritual journey to higher enlightenment. His ideology is rooted in teachings of yoga and meditation that say existence transcends the body and mind.

Once while flying, he imagined what it would feel like to die if the plane crashed. Moments later, the plane started to plunge. After the plane steadied, Felos wrote that God spoke to him: "

"Be careful what you think,' God said. "You are more powerful than you realize! "

Source: DAVID KARP, St. Petersburg Times March 31, 2005

George Felos has written this in book Litigation as Spiritual Practice,



Such a deep, dark, silent blue. I stared as far into her eyes as I could, hoping to sense some glimmer of understanding, some hint of awareness. The deeper I dove, the darker became the blue, until the blue became the black of some bottomless lake. "Mrs. Browning, do you want to die ... do you want to die?" I nearly shouted as I continued to peer into her pools of strikingly beautiful but incognizant blue. It felt so eerie. Her eyes were wide open and crystal clear, but instead of the warmth of lucidity, they burned with the ice of expressionlessness.

In Chapter 8, titled "Soul-Speak," Felos describes a psychic communication between him and the "vegetative" Browning, during which he promised to "help" her leave this earthly life.
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Bobby Schindler, brother of Terri's Schiavo, said on Fox News Hannity and Colme "I think Mr. Felos has some infatuation with death."

The successful efforts of Schiavo's husband to discontinue life support prompted a fierce debate over bioethics, euthanasia, legal guardianship, federalism, and civil rights, as well as an active counter-effort to keep her alive. On March 18, 2005, her gastric feeding tube was removed under court order.

Robert Schindler told the media that his daughter's lips and eyes were "bleeding" from lack of hydration, that her skin was "peeling," (<http://www.cnn.com/2005/LAW/03/26/schiavo/index.html>)



Terri's father, Robert, called her starvation and dehydration "Judicial homicide".

In a news conference the following day, Michael Schiavo's attorney, George Felos, disputed Schindler's account, saying "she looked beautiful. In all the years I've seen Mrs. Schiavo, I've never seen such a look of peace and beauty upon her."

Michael Schiavo, who was his wife's guardian, controlled who could visit her and when. On March 31st, 2005, at around 9:05 a.m EST, after 13 days without her feeding tube, Terri Schiavo died. The removal of the feeding tube resulted in Schiavo's death by dehydration. "May God give grace to our family," said **Suzanne Vitadamo**, Terri's sister.

Rev. Frank Pavone, a Roman Catholic priest: "This is not only a death, with all the sadness that brings, but this is a killing, and for that we not only grieve that Terri has passed but we grieve that our nation has allowed such an atrocity as this and we pray that it will never happen again."

Source: Associated Press: March 31, 2005

In an ABC News poll from March 21, 2005, 63 percent majority said that they support the removal of Schiavo's feeding tube. One of the effects of this case is that Americans are showing an increased interest in living wills. **Source:** From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

"Permanent vegetative state" { Originally described and named by Fred Plum and Brian Jennet in 1972: AMA: Diagnosing The Permanent Vegetative State by Ronald Cranford, MD} is a **subjective diagnosis**. It's not like discovering a tumor or a broken leg. It's a sort of test .. to demonstrate that she still has human qualities. And the diagnosis, when it's applied, means she failed in someone's judgment, and has slipped from humanness to "vegetation." She's become a different class of being. Doctors and ethicists are arguing over whether {one} is human or vegetable. The diagnosis is a newly-created one (since and is rapidly assuming the status of a legitimate medical term, "PVS."

What's dangerous about trying to demonstrate that Christine isn't a vegetable - - yet - - is that it gives legitimacy to the term. And the thinking behind the term is a direct challenge to Christianity, to biblical teaching. **Source:** Presbyterians: Pro-Life

In a new ABC News/Washington Post poll, 65 percent of Americans say the spouse rather than the parents should have final say in such disputes; 25 percent say it should be the parents.

Alarmingly, 46 percent of Evangelical Protestants are in favor of removing the tube, 44 percent opposed.

So, whose life is it anyway?

If a patient's wishes are unknown, we must resist the temptation to engage in quality of life judgments regarding a patient. Disability rights groups help remind us how to respect medically-disabled living human beings who are not "imminently dying despite all that medicine has to offer." Such people do not need a "right to die" but rather the "support to live." Let us not devalue and fail to protect people whose quality of life appears to be very low. We are all at risk when any one of us is left unprotected in such circumstances." **Source:** The Center for Bioethics and Human Dignity:

http://www.cbhd.org/resources/endoflife/kilner_2005-03-31.htm

"We know that physical death is inevitable (Psalm 89:48; Hebrews 9:27). However, God alone is sovereign over when and how a person's death occurs. Job testifies in Job 30:23, "For I know that You (God) will bring me to death and to the house of meeting for all living. God has the final say over death (see also 1 Corinthians 15:26, 54-56; Hebrews 2:9, 14-15; Revelation 21:4). Euthanasia is man's way of trying to usurp that authority from God. **Source:** <http://www.gotquestions.org>

"The Bible teaches that human beings are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26) and therefore have dignity and value. Human life is sacred and should not be terminated merely because life is difficult or inconvenient. Psalm 139 teaches that humans are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Society must not place an arbitrary standard of quality above God's absolute standard of human value and worth. This does not mean that people will no longer need to make difficult decisions

about treatment and care, but it does mean that these decisions will be guided by an objective, absolute standard of human worth.

The Bible also teaches that God is sovereign over life and death. Christians can agree with Job when he said, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). The Lord said, "See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand" (Deut. 32:39). God has ordained our days (Ps. 139:16) and is in control of our lives.

Another foundational principle involves a biblical view of life-taking. The Bible specifically condemns murder (Exod. 20:13), and this would include active forms of euthanasia in which another person (doctor, nurse, or friend) hastens death in a patient. "

Another foundational principle is a biblical view of death. Death is both unnatural and inevitable. It is an unnatural intrusion into our lives as a consequence of the fall (Gen. 2:17). It is the last enemy to be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26, 56).

Therefore Christians can reject humanistic ideas that assume death as nothing more than a natural transition. But the Bible also teaches that death (under the present conditions) is inevitable. There is "a time to be born and a time to die" (Eccles. 3:2). Death is a part of life and the doorway to another, better life.

When does death occur? Modern medicine defines death primarily as a biological event; yet Scripture defines death as a spiritual event that has biological consequences. Death, according to the Bible, occurs when the spirit leaves the body (Eccles. 12:7; James 2:26). **Source:** <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/euthan.html>

Final thoughts:

"If human life can be taken before birth, there is no logical reason why it cannot be taken after birth. Thus the quality of life, arbitrarily judged by fallible and sinful people, becomes the standard for killing or not killing human life - whether unborn, newly born, the rich, or the aged. But what then does this say about the handicapped now alive? Isn't their life wrongly and tragically de-valued? There are people who will read this book who would be allowed to die under these criteria if they were born today. The question of human life truly is a water-shed issue." Source: **Schaeffer, Francis, *The Great Evangelical Disaster***, Crossway, 1984,

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